

HB 75 Fact Sheet
State Funding for Head Start and Early Head Start

The Background: High quality early childhood education is a sound investment – children who are enrolled in such programs are more likely to stay in school (reduces drop-out rate), more likely to be productive citizens (statistically more likely to be employed) and better able to learn and succeed in school.

For every dollar a state invests in high quality early education, there is a return on investment of \$8.00 according to one study (Rolnick & Grunewald) and a 16% rate of return demonstrated in another study (Perry Preschool).

Head Start is a federally funded preschool program, generally for four-year-olds, created in 1965. It provides education, health, nutrition, and parental involvement services to low-income children and their families. Early Head Start provides similar services to low-income children aged zero through three. Study after study demonstrates that participation in Head Start enhances life-long learning and ensures school readiness.

The Problem –For all its success, Head Start is chronically underfunded. Lack of financial resources results in inadequate pay and benefits for the Head Start workforce. In Montana, a Head Start teacher earns about \$16,000 a year. Limited financial resources also mean poor to non-existent benefits – medical, pension, sick leave, vacation, and so on. This makes it difficult to recruit and retain the excellent staff needed to provide a quality Head Start program. Many Head Start employees qualify for the Head Start program themselves, as well as other programs designed to assist the working poor.

Montana is one of the few states that does not provide any state funding for Head Start. States provide funding to supplement Head Start and Early Head Start federal funds for a number of purposes, including to:

- Improve recruitment and retention of staff.
- Help workers and providers meet educational and training standards.
- Extend the Head Start day or year.

The Solution--HB 75 provides a state appropriation of \$300 per Head Start and Early Head Start child enrolled in the program. The funding totals \$1.6 million for the biennium. HB 75 funding is distributed by the Early Childhood Services Bureau of the Montana Department Public of Health and Human Services.